

SFGate.com**Oil spills into S.F. Bay south of Bay Bridge**

Henry K. Lee, Peter Fimrite, Heather Knight, John Coté, Chronicle Staff Writers

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(10-30) 12:16 PDT SAN FRANCISCO -- A fuel line on a tanker taking on bunker oil from a barge ruptured this morning, spilling a mile-long sheen of oil into the bay south of the Bay Bridge, the Coast Guard said.

The fuel line on the oil tanker the Dubai Star ruptured at 6:48 a.m. as the vessel and the barge were anchored 2 1/2 miles south of the Bay Bridge, the Coast Guard said. A large patch of oil drifted south with the tide.

It was unclear how much bunker fuel was in the water, Coast Guard Petty Officer Erik Swanson said.

"It's hard to determine ... because a little oil can spread over a large area," Swanson said. "But this is bunker fuel, which is a little heavier."

A skimmer has been deployed, and 2,500 feet of boom was en route from National Response Corp., which responds to oil spills, Swanson said.

As of 11 a.m., there were no reports of oil washing up on shore.

Nathan Ballard, a spokesman for San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, said the mayor convened a half-hour conference call with the Coast Guard, the state Department of Fish and Game and the city Department of Emergency Management this morning and was told that fewer than 100 gallons had spilled into the bay.

"That is, I must emphasize, a preliminary estimate," Ballard said.

Earlier, he said the mayor's office had initially been told the spill was just 1 to 5 gallons.

The Marine Spill Response Corp., a nonprofit oil-spill removal organization, has sent three major oil cleanup vessels to the scene.

Ballard said booms have been placed around the Dubai Star to contain the oil. The mayor offered city resources including boats and personnel to help the clean-up, but they haven't been deemed necessary yet, Ballard said.

The city was slow to learn of any information when the Cosco Busan container ship hit the Bay Bridge almost exactly two years ago, on Nov. 7, 2007. Ballard said it was different this time around.

"The mayor is concerned, but is satisfied the lines of communication are open and the facts are being relayed in real time," Ballard said.

At the time of the spill, the tide was coming into the bay and carrying the oil south, toward the Peninsula and

southern Alameda County. As of about 10 a.m., the tide switched direction and began moving out, which will be the case until about 4 p.m., when the tide will again be moving into the bay.

Bill O'Callahan, a supervisor at San Mateo County's Office of Emergency Services, said the county's dispatch center had been told of the spill, but the information he received indicated only about 5 gallons were in the water.

The county is not mounting any response at this point, O'Callahan said.

State officials notified the Alameda County Office of Emergency Services of the spill at 9 a.m., said sheriff's Sgt. J.D. Nelson, a spokesman for the agency.

"The spill was not technically in our water," he said, adding that he would have expected more rapid notification had the spill been in local waters.

The Dubai Star is a Panamanian-flagged vessel built in 2007. It is owned by South Harmony Shipping Inc. of Panama.

Bunker fuel is the same oil that spilled from the Cosco Busan. Some 50,000 gallons spilled, much of which washed up on beaches in the bay and along the Pacific coast from Sonoma to San Mateo counties.

About 2,400 birds were killed in the spill, and officials estimated the cleanup cost at \$70 million.

Alexia Retallack, spokeswoman for state Department of Fish and Game, said it is too early to tell what the effect might be on wildlife.

"We've got everybody en route," Retallack said. "We're in the process of gathering information."

The Oiled Wildlife Care Network has been mobilized to do reconnaissance and recovery of oiled birds and other wildlife.

"We've had reports of sightings, but nothing confirmed," Retallack said.

Anyone who sees oiled wildlife should call (877) 823-6926, she said.

E-mail the writers at hlee@sfchronicle.com, pfimrite@sfchronicle.com, hknight@sfchronicle.com and jcote@sfchronicle.com.

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